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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write to express my continued, deep, and growing concerns about potential retaliatory tariffs against American farmers and ranchers. North Dakota is home to more than 30,000 farmers and ranchers, and the agricultural industry supports nearly 25 percent of our workforce. A trade war is the last thing North Dakota's farmers want or need – especially as they have already been facing drought and low commodity prices. Without these export opportunities, communities from the Red River Valley to the western part of North Dakota would not be able to sell their products and would likely face one of the worst agricultural disasters in a generation.

On April 4, the Chinese government announced potential \$50 billion in retaliatory tariffs, which would include a 25 percent tariff on 106 American products – including some 93 agricultural products. These retaliatory tariffs are only being considered by the Chinese government because of the tariffs proposed by the United States in March. The announcement on April 5, of an additional \$100 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods is concerning for many in the agricultural industry and has created much confusion across industries due to the mixed signals from your administration. And today, China indicated it would respond “forcefully” to this round of tariffs, which would could cause further harm to the agricultural economy and go beyond American exports.

This escalation is extremely worrisome since many growers are already experiencing a prolonged period of depressed commodity prices. These retaliatory tariffs – which have yet to go into effect – have already caused commodity markets to further decline. For instance, China named soybeans as a potential target for retaliatory tariffs – the largest value targeted by the 25 percent tariff. In 2016, North Dakota's soybean production was valued at nearly \$2.23 billion, of which, 71 percent or over \$1.5 billion, was exported to China. Following China's April 4, announcement, soybean farmers across America awoke to a loss of \$1.72 billion in soybean futures.

There's no question that China needs to do better in fulfilling its trade commitments with the United States. However, these potential tariffs from China on American soybeans and many other agricultural products would severely impact the bottom lines of our farmers and ranchers. These actions risk the livelihoods of those across rural America. I urge you and your administration to engage China in a constructive manner and work proactively to support policies that help support our farmers and ranchers and grow our rural economy.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate

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